

To: Washington State Climate Advisory Team
Re: CAT public comment analysis: summary of themes
Date: January 23, 2008

This memo summarizes the themes that have emerged from the comments received from the public on the draft recommendations and interim CAT report. This summary has been prepared for the CAT by its staff. This summary is not designed to be fully inclusive, but is intended to give the CAT members a flavor of the comments received. The CAT members are urged to peruse the complete comments available on the CAT website (www.ecy.wa.gov/climatechange/).

Over the past 11 months, members of the public have engaged in dialogue with the CAT and TWGs about actions to address climate change in Washington. All meetings of the CAT were open to the public, and the work from each group was made available online throughout the process for review and comment. After the CAT developed its draft recommendations, the Washington Departments of Ecology and Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED) invited the public to submit comments on the CAT recommendations, as well on the Preparation and Adaptation Working Groups recommendations, and the Education and Engagement Strategy. These draft recommendations were initially released for a three-week public comment period on December 21, 2007; in response to several requests from members of the public, the comment period was subsequently extended to January 22, 2008.

Broadly, comments received on the interim CAT report fall into two categories; those that were supportive of the effort and/or the report, often calling for the CAT to “do more”, and those that were opposed to the effort and/or the report, often questioning the causes and/or occurrence of global warming.

▪ **General support of the report and/or effort**

Approximately 50% of the comments were supportive of the report and/or effort, and were appreciative of the CAT’s effort and work. One respondent called it this an “insightful and creative framework for beginning to address the issue”.

▪ **Act now**

Several respondents stated that we need to act now, and that we have no time to waste. One commenter noted “This is every bit as much or more of an emergency as WWII and should be treated that way.”

▪ **Go further**

Several respondents called on the CAT to “do more” with ideas that were considered in the CAT’s recommendations, including:

- Reinvent public transportation, increase mass transit options, and support ferries
- Pursue stricter growth regulations
- Generate better information through transportation planning to understand how these projects will impact greenhouse gas emissions and global warming
- Give more emphasis to a support system for local foods so that the goods from those farms have a local market
- Support organic, locally grown and sold foods, and sustainable forestry, and view these efforts as a subset of a larger sustainable Washington
- Don’t just slow the rate of conversion - stop it, to preserve land

▪ **Consider additional strategies**

Several comments contained suggestions for additional strategies to address climate change than those that are mentioned in the CAT’s recommendations. Some examples include:

- Lower the speed limit to 55 miles per hour
- Support the expanded development of nuclear energy
- Pursue tax shifting by taxing more of what we don’t want, like pollution and resource depletion
- Pursue conservation as a way to reduce emissions
- Consider supporting Architecture 2030 goals for the building sector

- Require manufacturers to take back and recycle their products
- Engage with internationally respected organizations within Washington to facilitate and manage the fundamental changes
- Require all counties to inspect vehicles for emissions
- Eliminate outdoor residential burning, except to protect against wildfires
- Close the Centralia coal fired power plant

▪ **Reconsider the biofuels strategy**

Several commenters asked that the CAT reconsider the biofuels mandate, citing environmental and economic concerns, such as increased fertilizer and pesticide use, a mixed net value, and the potential for fuel production to affect food production and costs.

▪ **Reconsider the long-term goal**

Several commenters asked that the long-term greenhouse gas emissions goal (50% reductions below 1990 levels by 2050) be reconsidered, noting that many climate scientists feel an 80% global reduction will likely be necessary. One commenter stated that Washington should adopt the 80% goal, “unless WA 1990 emissions are so low that the 50% reduction is the same level as an 80% national/global reduction”.

▪ **General opposition to the report and/or effort**

Approximately 50% of the comments were opposed to the report, and/or the effort taken by Washington to address climate change, and/or strongly disagreed with the need for or cost of taking action to reduce emissions.

▪ **Government interference**

Several commenters expressed that the recommendations as unnecessary intervention by government, and in general saw this more as a 'big-government' concern rather than a valid environmental or economic one. Comments included:

- 12 expensive and intrusive expansions of government are unnecessary and invitations to litigation
- The threat of global warming is really just hyperbole meant to give government more control over peoples' lives
- Global warming is a way for government to take away liberty and raise taxes

▪ **Costs outweigh the benefits**

Several commenters cited the costs associated with reducing GHGs:

- The science is uncertain and the costs of government action exceed the arguable benefit.
- This won't help, and will come at great taxpayer expense.

▪ **Global warming is a myth and/or there is significant scientific uncertainty**

Several respondents questioned the existence of global warming, stating that global warming is a myth or there is significant scientific uncertainty:

- Global warming is a myth brought to us by socialists trying to destroy the economy and working class of the United States.
- As there is just as much chance the world will cool in the next 100 years, what are the State's plans for global cooling?

▪ **Global warming is not happening, and/or is not caused by human activities**

Several comments raised doubt that global warming is happening, or if it is, that human activity is causing the changes, and/or it is not something we can control.

- We can't change the weather, we don't know if man is impacting the climate and if we are, we don't know if that's good or bad, and if bad, we don't know if we can do anything about it
- Global warming is caused by sun spots and the tilt of the earth
- Global warming is a fact of nature

- **Specific concerns with the analysis**

- The costs and consequences of the proposed changes and regulations are not being adequately addressed
- The analysis and recommendations are incomplete
- Present opposing views

- **Volunteering to participate in the next phase**

A few commenters offered to help in the next phases of the State's climate work.

- **Improvements to the process**

A few commenters suggested that the process could be improved with a more balanced composition of CAT (e.g. more NGOs, labor, small business and public citizens).

- **Improvements to the clarity of the report**

Several commenters identified specific areas where the draft could be made clearer, and/or provided more specificity to the actions already proposed (e.g. encouraging telecommuting, add a list of acronyms); the staff has updated the interim report in response to comments that improved the communication of the CAT's recommendations and findings.